9

THE OPERA: A POEM.

[Price One Shilling.]

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A POEM.

By the AUTHOR of the COACH DRIVERS.

BOOK I.

——————facit Indignatio Versum

Cedite Tibicines ——— ——— ——— MART.

LONDON,

Printed for the AUTHOR;

And Sold by W. FLEXNEY, opposite Gray's-Inn Gate, Holborn; C. BATHURST, in Fleet-Street; G. KEARSLY, in Ludgate-Street; and M. HINGESTON, at Temple-Bar.

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THE

OPERA:

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POEM.

WHY, tell me why, good heav'n, was I ſo curſt,
Why doom'd of all ill fates to bear the worſt;
Why fated on this wretched ſpot to dwell,
To ſee my country tangled in the ſpell
Of ſneering Folly, there well pleas'd remain,
Adore the charm, and hug the galling chain:
Ye power's! had frozen Zembla giv'n me birth,
Where fainting rays ſcarce dare to creep on earth;
Where Darkneſs loves in dreary pomp to reign,
Tho' thouſand envious tapers burn in vain,

(In vain they burn, in vain each glimm'ring ray,
The gloomy horror ſtrives to chace away;
In vain they feebly lift their brighteſt flame,
The gloomy horror ſtill remains the ſame;
Unmov'd their fruitleſs efforts ſtill defies,
Nor ſpite of all their force united flies;
They the thick gloom ſcarce more to pierce appear,
Than Reaſon's lamp, the miſt of Folly here;
But barely ſerving this great end at moſt,
To keep dull heads from bumping 'gainſt a poſt:)
Where frowning winter hectors uncontroul'd,
Where the keen air inflicts extremeſt cold;
Where rougheſt winds with rougheſt fury blow;
Where dazling gleams one trackleſs wild of ſnow;
Where fleecy clouds ne'er deck the ſummer ſky,
Where no gay flow'r invites the wandring eye;
Where prattling Age in ſocial converſe join'd,
No ſnug warm ſunny corner e'er can find,
In grateful Indolence to baſk away
The liſtleſs Hours; where the ſharp-biting Day
Compels e'en fur-clad Labour to retire;
Where Eaſe ſits ever crouching o'er the fire;

E'en there I had been bleſt, ſupremely bleſt,
Free from thoſe pangs which now diſtract my breaſt.

Tho' fleecy clouds here paint the ſummer ſky,
Tho' beauteous flow'rs attract the admiring eye;
Tho' prattling Age in ſocial converſe join'd,
Can always here ſome ſunny corner find,
In grateful Indolence to baſk away
The liſtleſs Hours; tho' here the chilleſt Day
Can mod'rate exerciſe with warmth inſpire;
And only ſloth ſits crouching o'er the fire:
Yet here with bleſſings thus profuſely ſown,
E'en here, when moſt I'm happy, ſtill I groan
In ſharper anguiſh than I there had known.

Place me on Afric's ſandy plains, where down
Ruſhing precipitant bright ſun beams drown
The ſick'ning eye; where horrid monſters teem
In dread abundance; where the cooling ſtream,
To the deaf waſte loud bellowing bootleſs pain,
Thirſt mad'ning ſeeks, but mad'ning ſeeks in vain;

Where trembling Zephyrs never dare appear;
Where burning ſands a leafleſs mantle wear;
Where Health ſits drooping in her ſultry bow'rs;
While Pain retards the ſlowly moving hours:
E'en there I had been bleſt, ſupremely bleſt,
Free from thoſe Ills which now diſtract my breaſt.

Tho' here the ſprightly Zephyrs ſportive play,
And earth is ever green and ever gay;
Tho' here e'en Sickneſs ſmiles in roſy bow'rs,
While Pleaſure wings the nimble footed hours:
Yet here, with bleſſings thus profuſely ſown,
E'en here, when moſt I'm happy, ſtill I groan
In ſharper anguiſh than I there had known.

(Thus ſpoke Moroſe, exclaiming loudly, whom
Impatience all the while drove round the room:
His nether lip in durance firm held faſt
Betwixt his teeth; at length himſelf he caſt
Into his ſeat; then fix'd a frownful look
On me:—I ſmiling, thus the wretch beſpoke)

S. Thou Son of ſpleen! why madly do'ſt thou rave?
This frantic wild behaviour, prithee leave:
'Fore gad, my dear, the world will think you craz'd;
Bleſſings you've curs'd, and bitt'reſt curſes prais'd:
Rail at thy country thus with bleſſings ſown,
And cauſe not roaſted or not frozen groan!
—'Tis Melancholy cauſes all thy pain,
And mopeful Hyp with all their fretful train;—
—— Of peeviſh diſcontent diſcharge thy breaſt,
Thy days will teem with joy, thy nights with reſt.

M. Poor brainleſs thing!—No, not that I was born
On Britain's heav'n befriended iſle, I mourn;
Nor e'er did ſullen Hyp in wayward mood,
Impede the genial current of my blood;
'Tis not for ſcorching deſarts that I pine,
Nor for keen cold would temp'rature reſign;
But ah! I mourn (alas! long baniſh'd hence!)
The ſad ſad loſs of nature and of ſenſe;
And doom'd with creatures ſuch as thee to dwell,
I ſuffer all I can conceive of hell.

S. He, he—(I laugh'd and thought 'twou'd be a joke,
The croſs-grain'd cruſty ruſty rogue to ſmoke;
And in my purpoſe did the more confide,
Well knowing all the world was on my ſide;
Ideal triumph ſmiling on my plan,
I ſmil'd, took ſnuff, then hemm'd and thus began)
He, he—(he frown'd) he he—(I laugh'd again,
Conqueſt in ſuch a cauſe quite ſure to gain)
He, he—moſt worthy Sir, your noble rage,
Againſt th' unnumber'd follies of the age,
Command our reverence, our beſt eſteem,
And ev'ry tongue ſhou'd make thy worth it's theme;
But ſince all actions are eſteem'd, you know,
According to the ſource from which they flow,
Thy virtues ſcarce will find th' expected meed,
For 'tis from want of taſte that they proceed;
You're void of Gout; you have not the BON TON;
Therefore, forſooth, you're right and others wrong;
A proof right well eſtabliſh'd! ſage concluſion!
—Obſcurity's the mother of deluſion:
When in your cloſet you inceſſant pore,
And thumb ſome duſty muſty volume o'er;

Plodding intent, on ſome grave blockhead's rules;
Some fool's bequeſt to all ſucceeding fools;
When thus with letters you converſe alone,
The world unknowing, to the world unknown;
Shall you pretend their pleaſures to annoy,
And damn the dear delights which they enjoy?
Then pert and froward let the dim-ey'd mole
Deſcant on beauty from her dirty hole;
There vent on heav'nly ANCASTER her ſpite,
And ſwear ſhe's ugly, for her eyes are bright.

M. 'Tis Reaſon only can conduct us, where
Dwells ſolid bliſs and happineſs ſincere;
She ſober Matron! flies the giddy crowd
Where ſprings the jeſt obſcene with laughter loud;
Where Diſſipation flants in gaudy ſtate,
While calm Reflection faints beneath her feet;
Where Scandal ſmiling is with ſmiles receiv'd,
And's thank'd for tales which yet are not believ'd;
Where dull Indiff'rence ſheaths each joyleſs heart,
Where Love in vain lets fly his keeneſt dart;

And, weeping, yields his mother's lov'd embrace
To PUG or FOPLING, who ſupplies his place:
Where Wealth on ſofteſt boſoms deals his wounds,
With thumps from bags of twenty thouſand pounds;
Where Honour ſcarce appears, nay ſearce is known,
Except (like heathen Jove) by name alone;
It's influence remov'd almoſt as far,
And like him *repreſented* by a ſtar;
From ſcenes like theſe Reaſon offended flies,
And from the painful view averts her eyes;
She with all piercing glance the ſnake ſurveys,
Which lurks unſeen in Pleaſure's flow'ry maze;
Thro' rougher paths purſues her ſteady way,
While heart-felt raptures all her toil o'erpay;
Leading her vot'ries, who her ſteps attend,
To realms of bliſs, and tranſport without end.

S. Reaſon! an errant vixen ſhe—who plac'd
At a rich feaſt, with ev'ry dainty grac'd,
Forbids the hungry longing gueſts to taſte;
Scaring dull fools with a dull diſmal tale
Of latent poiſons—then they groan—look pale—

In ev'ry diſh think Death in ambuſh lies——
While the wiſe man eats, laughs, and her defies:
Reaſon!—ſhe like thoſe ſurly wights who wait
To ſell admiſſion at his lordſhip's gate;
When, the gay proſpect op'ning to your view,
You ſtrait admire, and ſtrive to enter too;
With all the haughty privilege of place,
She bangs the door of pleaſure in your face.

M. Alas! you know her not—Oh! cou'd you ſee
That fund of joy of which ſhe holds the key;
With mind impartial, could you but compare
Her ſober grace, with Pleaſure's tawdry glare;
Did your ſtruck heart the force of truth confeſs,
And know the vain vacuity of dreſs,
With ſoul enraptur'd Reaſon you'd adore,
And Pleaſure, pleas'd exchange, for ſomething more;
Pleaſure's a gay coquet, will lead you on
With flatt'ring hopes, and wring your heart when done,
Reaſon will ne'er on eaſy Faith impoſe,
But, more than Pleaſure *promiſes*, beſtows:

Reaſon, and Virtue, every breaſt ſhall own,
Like CHARLOTTE, pleaſe the more, the more they're known.

S. So ſweetly ſliding, troll along your tongue
The rules of good and ill, of right and wrong,
'Egad, methinks in public you ſhou'd teach,
And from your pulpit ſaving doctrines preach.

M. Whilſt modeſt Piety ſtrives ſtill in vain,
A wretched ſcanty ſuſtenance t'attain,
Forc'd to divide 'twixt Earth and Heav'n his care,
To ſhift, and ſtarve, on thirty pounds a year;
While from on high, proud W——— looks down,
And *condeſcends* to grace him with a frown;
(W——— who can rant, and rage, and mouth
At Sanctity itſelf, not ſparing L——)
The ſacred function humbly I diſclaim,
Nor wiſh in church records to ſet my name.

S. In truth 'tis excellent—your vain abuſe
On whom you pleaſe, at random to let looſe:

—Some foibles ſtill with higheſt virtue join'd,
In ev'ry breaſt, in ev'ry age you'd find;
Why caſt on W——— your ſpleen abroad?
England e'er now, has reverenced a LAUD.
Tho' you poſſeſs'd an hundred clam'rous tongues,
A throat of adamant, and brazen lungs;
Tho' you ſhould roar till e'en thoſe lungs ſhou'd burſt
Calling, of ev'ry age the preſent worſt;
I then might this believe, but nothing more,
That we are now what others were before.

M. If I ſhould grant you, that preceding times
Were full as pregnant as our own with crimes,
If this I grant, (tho' all too haſty ſpoke)
The raſh conceſſion TRUTH muſt needs revoke;
Since Vice triumphant reigns in ev'ry place,
And Virtue dares not ſhew her honeſt face;
But baſhful creeps about in ſtrange diſguiſe,
Wearing, for ſake of peace, the maſk of Vice:

Since Juſtice from her ſacred temple hurl'd,
From whence ſhe us'd to bleſs a thankful world,

Now mounted on a weather-cock at laſt,
Is turn'd, and turn'd, by ev'ry partial blaſt,
While Fortune fills her once reſpected ſeat,
And tramples Equity beneath her feet:
Iſſuing abroad her giddy blind decrees,
Juſt as a cunning ſly State-juggler pleaſe,
Who by the ſpecious lot of pack'd Court-cards
Acquits, condemns, ſaves, puniſhes, rewards:
Who public Spirit drove with brutal hand,
With WILKES, to wander in a foreign land;
(Wilkes, whom inceſſantly to lateſt days
With grateful accents Liberty ſhall praiſe:)
Since Valour halting on his wooden leg,
Is forc'd by want, of Cowardice to beg;
This the reward of all his glorious toil,
While rav'nous A——— devours the ſpoil,
While they whoſe brav'ry did the banquet carve,
At diſtance wait, and look, and ſigh, and ſtarve:

Since Chriſtian C——, with Chriſtian zeal inſpir'd,
A peaceful land, which only peace deſir'd,

Ranſacks, deſtroys, lays deep in blood and flames;
Then pious bleſſes God, who bleſt his pious aims.
(—Remorſe!—to ſcourge yon parricide, forbear:
If C—— be guiltleſs, what has he to fear?)
Since Charity, the attribute of Heav'n,
The Child of Providence, from hence is driv'n;
She who of late was ever ſeen to ſmile
With ſweeteſt influence o'er the Britiſh Iſle;
That Charity which late ſo bounteous fed,
The German Wand'rers, now is loſt—is dead——
—BARBADOES, ſunk in aſhes on the plain,
Of Britain begs relief, and begs in vain.——

Hence MALICE ſtraining wide her horrid throat,
Croaks forth Detraction with a raven's note;
" 'Twas Curioſity, who leagued with Pride,
" The hungry Palatines with food ſupply'd;
" 'Twas mean Self-int'reſt ſent the mournful band,
" To reach with joyful hearts their deſtin'd land:
" When here at firſt their little tents were plac'd,
" By Harmony and humble Quiet grac'd,

" Did I not ſee an idly buſy throng
" Supinely gape, and ſtare, and ſtalk along?
" While Wonder, with an empty curious eye,
" Thro' the new ſcene delighted lov'd to pry;
" While Idleneſs on the dear theme would talk,
" *Oh! 'twas ſo charming for a morning-walk*;
" Then ſaunt'ring homeward, at a Banker's ſhop,
" With ſenſeleſs grin, the gay Donation drop;
" Till CAUTION whiſper'd—Learn to be diſcreet,
" They who here feaſt your eyes, here too muſt eat—
" At CAUTION's call away with gifts they're ſent,
" And preſent bounties future ills prevent:
(So PHARAOH to avoid impending ſmart,
Was glad to let the Iſraelites depart)
" But ah! had their diſtreſſes been as deep,
" As e'er the eye of Pity learn'd to weep;
" If abſent they had aſk'd for Britain's aid,
" And from another ſhore aſſiſtance pray'd;
" In Anguiſh ſtill had ev'ry Boſom heav'd;
" Britain had ne'er their miſeries reliev'd;
" BARBADOES ſtands a proof."—Thus MALICE cries,
While CANDOUR bluſhing, ſcarce that proof denies.

—Rouze, Britons rouze! retrieve your injur'd name,
Preſerve Barbadoes, and preſerve your fame!*

Since Patriotiſm, immeſh'd in courtly ſnare,
Glories the foul inglorious Badge to wear
Of ſervile Pomp: and dares (how meanly bold!)
Barter celeſtial Fame for earthly Gold;
And of his ſhameful honours vainly proud,
Struts, ſmiling ſtately, thro' the fleering croud:
—Gods! who can help the peerling to deride,
To ſee his tongue with purple ribband ty'd;
While chuckling all aloof, a Northern Crew,
The piteous Spectacle with rapture view:—
—That ſuaſive, voluble, inchanting tongue,
On which applauding Senates liſt'ning hung;
Which us'd ſo LOUD for Liberty to roar—
—Is ſtill—is dumb—is gagg'd—is heard no more.
—Like ſome ſtout ſurly maſtiff C——— ſtands,
Who long had guarded well from ruffian hands.

* The Author has great pleaſure in obſerving, that ſeveral Sums ſubſcribed ſince the above lines were written, towards the relief of theſe unhappy Sufferers, have, in a great meaſure, obviated the foregoing Reflection.

His maſter's ſafety—(like a maſtiff too
His private Intereſt ever had in view,
What e'er he ſeem'd) until at length a Sop,
With wily art into his jaws let drop,
Lays him aſleep, gorg'd with the fav'ry meal;
While cunning Rogues ſecurely rob and ſteal.

Since villains live who dare e'en Heav'n oppoſe,
Who e'en to friendly Providence are foes,
Who Good make Evil, Evil render worſe,
Deſtroying bleſſings to create a curſe:
Who late when Plenty took her ſmiling ſtand,
Shedding her mildeſt influence o'er the land;
With ruthleſs heart, with more than ſavage breaſt,
Faſt in cloſe priſons bound the heav'nly gueſt;
Nay were determin'd too to ſend her o'er,
Like felon-convicts, to a diſtant ſhore;
Tho' Britain's ſons look'd on with ſtreaming eyes,
And mourn'd the fatal ſcene in piercing cries:
Till (by our moſt propitious ſtars deſign'd
Firmly to rule, and ruling bleſs mankind)

Till George aroſe; 'till he their curs'd intent,
Did like a guardian Deity prevent,
Embargo cry'd—the throng with raptur'd voice,
Hail the glad ſound, and e'en with tears rejoice:
With hearts o'erflowing love, almoſt adore
The ſacred, godlike ſtretch of kingly power.

Lives there a wretch who, deaf to honour, cou'd
From private pique, oppoſe a public good;
Who, ignorant what CONSTITUTION meant,
Still kept the dry dull track of Precedent;
Who ever in his tedious Diſputations
Still winded long, long-winded Calculations;
A very Cypher——ever held at nought,
Except when Figures their aſſiſtance brought;
Who, having glean'd of Government a ſmattering,
About it, and about it would be chattering;
Cry 'twas illegal, thus t'extend the right
Of Majeſty: "to ſave a Land in ſpite
"Of fundamental laws! and all the reaſon
"The cries of Millions!—oh! 'tis downright treaſon!

" By MAGNA CHARTA, don't we clearly ſee
" That Parliament to every Decree,
" Muſt in concurrence join? and that no Law
" Unſtampt by them, ſhould e'er obedience draw?
" Why then unwarrantably ſave the State!
" Why not the ſenſe of Parliament await!
" Rather by far than from old maxims ſwerve,
" Let ENGLAND *conſtitutionally* ſtarve."
—If ſuch a Slave there be (thro' all her plains,
Britain, that ſuch a Slave there IS, complains)
In former ages had he liv'd, and view'd
Our bleſſed Lord and Saviour doing good;
Had he beheld him on the Sabbath-day,
Diſmiſs the poor diſeaſed in health away;
His heart, no doubt, had ſhook with pious awe,
At ſuch a flagrant horrid breach of Law;
Doubtleſs that Slave the Phariſees had join'd,
And with them 'gainſt the SON of GOD combin'd.——

Since from all this it might be clearly ſhewn,
That we're in Vice unrivall'd, and alone,

Obedient to her ſinful dictates more,
Than ever ſinful Nation were before;
Still, tho' the painful ſcrutiny I wave,
Anxious my Country's ſinking Fame to ſave;
Yet FOLLY ſtill, this CANDOUR muſt allow,
Ne'er roſe to ſuch luxuriance as now.

S. You're mad, my Friend—

M. THE OPERA at once,
Will juſtify the Sentence I pronounce:
It is by Heav'n (reply'd the wrathful Sage
His boſom ſwelling with indignant rage)
A *vain, dull, vicious, empty, ſing-ſong Age.*

END OF BOOK THE FIRST.

END OF DOCTOR THE FIRST.